

What is Email?



Most people use the **Internet** primarily to **email** and **surf the World Wide Web**.

Simply put, email, or "**electronic mail**," is the process of sending and receiving messages over the Internet.

While email is similar to a **traditional mail system**, or "**snail mail**," as it's sometimes referred to, it's also very different. See the chart below.

	"Snail" Mail	Email
What is mailed?	Letter, Card, Postcard, Larger packages	Electronic Text Message, electronic pictures, forms etc.
In what is it delivered?	Envelope, etc	Packet: A piece of text delivered over the Internet
Who is it from?	Sender: John Doe	Sender: John Doe
Who is it for?	Recipient: Jane Doe	Recipient: Jane Doe
Address?	123 Somewhere Street Somewhere, KY, 44444	Jane.doe@ky.org
Who/What delivers it?	Mail Carrier/Mailman	Mail Server and Email client software: Rely on one another to both send and deliver email
Where is it delivered?	Mailbox	Email client software's INBOX: Text editor used to compose, send, receive and manage email
Delivery Time?	Varies, usually 2 days	A few minutes unless technical problems

After reading your email, you can save it, forward it to others, or delete it. If you want paper copies, you can print your email messages.

Anatomy of an Email Address

An **email address** is required to send and receive email. Email addresses are different from "snail mail" addresses. They usually consist of three parts: a **user name**, an "**at**" symbol (@), and a **domain name**.

john.doe@ky.gov

1. **User name:** john.doe
Located to the **left** of the @ symbol, a user name identifies your account on the email server that handles the email.
2. @
Means "**at**" and separates your account name and the name of the mail server name. For example, john.doe "is located at" ky.gov.
3. **Domain Name:** ky.gov
The domain name usually consists of two **pieces of identifying information**. The first piece is the name of the **email server** and is located to the **right** of the @ symbol. For example, **ky** is the name of the email server. The **second piece**, usually a three-letter **extension**, indicates the **top-level domain**. They are separated by a **period**, called "**dots**."
John.doe@ky.gov said out loud would be: "**john dot doe at k y dot gov**"

Top Level Domains

Top-level domains may help you figure out the type of organization the recipient is associated with. See the chart below.

Extension	Meaning	Examples
.com	A company or business	www.microsoft.com, www.simpletruths.com
.org	A non-profit or not-for-profit institution	www.unitedwayfranklincounty.org, www.astd.org
.gov	US Governmental agency	www.kentucky.gov, www.whitehouse.gov
.mil	US Military	www.army.mil, navy.mil
.edu	US Educational institution	www.kysu.edu, www.louisville.edu